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DEVELOPING TALENTS FOR GREATER USEFULNESS *

By

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Marshall Jacobs sways this morning in the Coshocton, Ohio, wind on top of a 308-foot flagpole. This man of vision and destiny sustains himself for 35 days, between Memorial holiday and Fourth of July. He is the highest and longest flagpole sitter in the world's history. He has devoted enormous energy to a paltry purpose. This steeplejack symbolizes much of our age -- prodigal expenditure for futile effect.

I speak this morning as a missionary for a use of life represented by 4-H. I speak to you when the uranium hurled from the sky as a missile has supplanted the geranium carried by the neighbor as a token of affection. I speak to you when a new civilization of nuclear energy-jet propulsion-television-frequency modulation global experience replaces the automobile-airplane-radio-movie civilization, which follows the wagon-stereopticon-coal scuttle-water well civilization of our grandfathers. I speak to you this morning when American destiny compels us to take a world responsibility for two twins to which wartime United States has given birth--the United Nations and the atomic bomb. These two children, tattooed with our flag, are cannibals--one must devour the other. Both cannot grow up in the same world.

The new world order, indeed, is embedded in our own geography, and we cannot avoid eternal responsibility. The structure of international organization bears the names, dates, places, and faces of our continent: Hot Springs, Virginia (FAO); Washington, District of Columbia, and Atlantic City, New Jersey (UNRRA); Chicago, Illinois (PICAO); Dumbarton Oaks, here in Washington, and San Francisco, California (UN); Bretton Woods, New Hampshire (IBRD and IMF).

I speak to you this June morning when our soil and our blood must make a civilization in which honest labor and sincere devotion to ideals can make a peaceful and happy world. I speak to you who are the oldest people in the whole, long history of the world. You are the white-bearded, silver-headed ancients. Compared with you Julius Caesar was a child in arms; Thomas Jefferson was an adolescent. Your ancestors were children in history when compared with you.

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I speak this morning as one who has found in 4-H the attitudes which our world needs to possess. I came to 4-H belatedly. Late in 1932 I left the Disarmament Conference in Geneva in the hope that somewhere in this world I could find a forum to make my meager influence felt to establish world order before our earth was shaken by war, bloodshed, and disaster. In a little Vermont village I met the county club agent; I served as club leader; I became a part of this great working neighborhood whose hands, and heads, and hearts, and health are pledged to better living.

Integrity of Effort

May I visit with you this morning about the attitudes of citizen-living? The real world is founded in the integrity of effort--hard and honest work. Last night the Surgeon General of the Army told me some facts about the war: How on VE-day 200,000 pints of blood were being flown across the Atlantic monthly; how no soldier in this war died from yellow fever; how only one died from tetanus; how 375,000 of 600,000 battle wounded were so brilliantly treated by physicians that they returned to battle duty in the theaters where they were wounded; how when the Japanese took military control of 95 percent of the world supply of quinine, six whole divisions of our Army were made impotent by the mosquito until atabrine was developed--3¹/₂ million tablets a year. Behind this great performance, back of the war miracle of medicine and surgery, stands a man who exemplified the integrity of work. Here is a secret of his life. When he was an intern, he asked for night duty when others requested the day shift--because he wanted to be where he could learn most. Now the man who worked at night is a man of many miracles. He knew the integrity of effort.

Technical Excellence

The world judges by results, not efforts. Results are produced by craftsmen. 4-H knows what craftsmen are made of. I am proud of the colleague who works in my office as my secretary. She is a 4-H alumna. She knows the meaning of the slogan: "Make the best better." But more than that she knows that a flower on the desk, a picture on the wall, a little twist on the dress will make life more colorful. And while other offices lack the thoughtful touch, our office, which is one of 4-H alumni, expresses a sentiment which belongs to those who know and care.

Casual Simplicity

Casual simplicity belongs to true greatness. Take the case of Helen Hayes. She met Charlie MacArthur at a party attended by George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Heywood Broun, George Kaufman, Robert Benchley, and Alexander Woollcott. They played a game, and she won the booby prize. While she was sitting alone on a bench, MacArthur sat down sympathetically beside her. He kept eating from a bag. "What are you eating?" Miss Hayes asked. "Peanuts," he replied, "Want some?" Miss Hayes nodded. He passed the bag and said, "I wish they were emeralds." Impressed by this casual simplicity, she married Charles MacArthur.

Naively Growing Up

First-class people are always naively growing up. Take Walt Disney. A group of nationally prominent educators gave a luncheon for him in Washington, crowning him the Leonardo de Disney of the twentieth century because he had joined classical music with Greek mythology to establish a new medium of expression.

This is what Disney said: "Gosh, folks, I'm no educator. I left high school in my freshman year. I had so much cooking on the stove I couldn't wait. All my education I've taken backwards. I felt the need for it and then I got it."

Working With and For Other People

Personality is the capacity to work with and for other people. We know in 4-H what this means; I would like to have time to cite you examples. May I merely quote Pope's couplet written about Newton on the fireplace at Wools-thorpe:

"Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light."

A man asked Mark Twain this question: "What is worse than a toothache and an earache at the same time?" Mark Twain replied: "St. Vitus' dance and rheumatism."

This summer our world fidgets but has pains in its moral muscles when it prepares to act. People sitting on top of flagpoles do not see the genuine world: people who know the integrity of effort, technical excellence, casual simplicity, and the virtue of ~~naively~~ always growing up.

Those of us who with head, hand, heart, and health, unite to make the best better look forward to the new day when we shall make uranium as neighborly as the geranium.

